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School Committee Minutes 06/12/2007

THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY, JUNE 12, 2007

Present: Susan Lovelace, Chair
Sean Garballey, Vice Chair
Jeff Thielman, Secretary
Denise Burns
Joe Curran
Sue Sheffler
Ronald Spangler

Superintendent: Nate Levenson
Asst. Supt.: Kevin Hutchinson
Chief Financial Off Sue Mazzarella
Sp. Ed. Director: Barbara Cataldo

Absent:
Student Reps.: Sean Conroy and Ella Hartenian
Joe Curran exited the meeting at 8:10 PM

Ms. Lovelace congratulated Mr. Garballey for graduating from UMASS Lowell.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Jack Duranceau – AEA President presented a statement he drafted for the members of the Arlington Education Association, and the members voted on June 4th and stated that 82% of membership supported this document. The statement would like the School Committee and the Superintendent to join in on expressing their dissatisfaction with the requirements of adequate yearly Progress. They would like MCAS test results not be the sole criterion in judging the quality of education in specific schools. To stand united against external pressures that interfere with their shared goal of quality education. The statement noted demands on teachers combined with distrust and a lack of input into the educational process within the district is harming morale and leading teachers away from teaching or to other districts.

Matt Walsh - Representing Dallin Parents, spoke of the concerns parents have to keep three third grade teachers at the Dallin School as it was proposed in the FY 08 budget and how teachers will be able to.

Three teachers from the Ottoson Middle School Sandra Caffelle, Donna Dolan and Anne Collozzo came tonight and asked Superintendent Levenson and School Committee to continue to look further to reinstate the 8th grade drama and to look into the budget and cut out contracted services, memberships, coaching for administration and professional development.

CONSENT AGENDA – all items listed with an asterisk (*) are considered to be routine and will be enacted by one motion.

There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a member of the Committee so requests, in which event the item will be considered in its normal sequence

- Approval of Warrant # 07159 in the amount of \$583,497.80
- Approval of Warrant # 07169 in the amount of \$243,443.00
- Approval of Minutes from May 22, 2007 and Executive Session on May 22, 2007.

- Approval of 8th grade students to NYC on Saturday, June 16th, 2007.

*On a motion by Mr. Garballey and seconded by Mr. Thielman it was
Voted to approve the consent agenda as presented.
Vote: 7-0 unanimously*

INTRODUCTION OF NEW THOMPSON ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL

Superintendent Levenson introduced Ms. Sheryl Donovan. Ms. Donovan, thanked Superintendent Levenson and the community and was happy to be back in the Boston area, and spoke on her experiences in New York City over the past ten years and this will be particularly helpful working at such a diverse school as the Thompson in Arlington.

TRAFFIC SUPERVISORS

Roseann Casaza President of the Arlington Traffic Supervisors along with Mr. Mark Bernard, the staff representative of Local 680 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal employees union who represents the Arlington Traffic Supervisors handed out a letter to Superintendent Levenson and School Committee members and to the Town residents and requested that the Arlington School Committee voluntarily recognize this union agent as the sole bargaining agent for the Arlington Traffic Supervisors. The statement included since reducing salaries of the Traffic Supervisors as many as eleven trained supervisors with longevity up to 21 years of service has left the department due to the hardships with the loss of pay.

The School Committee members applaud the traffic supervisors, appreciate all the work, and would like to reunite the relationship with each other. The members and Superintendent Levenson support the Local 680 representative for the Traffic supervisors.

*On a motion by Mr. Garballey and seconded by Mr. Curran it was
Voted to move the Arlington School Committee voluntarily recognize the American Federation of the State, county, and municipal employees, local 680, and council 93 as the sole bargaining agent for the Arlington Traffic Supervisors.
Vote: 7-0 unanimously*

21st CENTURY – PART II

Mr. Skidmore first spoke about the students at Arlington High School and how many of them already are prepared for social, emotional and vocational success and to continue with the areas of focus from:

The seven areas of focus are:

1. Higher –order thinking skills through interdisciplinary learning, analysis, and synthesis of information.
2. Media literacy –
3. Teamwork in a diverse, multicultural world
4. Stress and time management
5. Communications skills
6. A love of learning coupled with a willingness to work hard
7. Math, Science, Technology, and Engineering expertise

Some of the many actions we are doing or will be doing to reach our 21st Century Education goals are to continue to have students evaluate and analysis ideas from each other. Having teachers show students how information from the Internet can be used and shared to create projects and research papers among various departments. Having students working as teams and requiring diverse skills from each other rather than working individually and to have each member be accountable for the work. Parents have asked for guidance on student support among teachers in each department to have homework load be more evenly distributed. The communication opportunities in all classrooms should be emphasized and encourage students to present projects to the entire class and having Arlington High School continue to offer courses that inspire and excite students. We also need to take action on the exposure of math, science and technology skills and also show awareness of them through Career Day.

Ms. Bodie stated that over 240 Math projects were part of the annual Math Fair and winners of the projects will have them displayed at the Museum of Science. Ms. Bodie spoke about the partnerships of the Arlington Public School Math, English and Science Departments with local universities such as UMASS Lowell, WPI, Harvard Divinity, and the Science Museums. The School Committee members appreciated all the hard work that has gone into the 21st Century presentation.

STANDARDS BASED EDUCATION & WEB-BASED STANDARDS

Assistant Superintendent Hutchinson gave a presentation regarding Standards-Based Education vs. Traditional. The main points to consider regarding traditional education would be:

- Time and support are constant
- Learning is the variable
- The Bell Curve is accepted practice
- Focus is on teaching
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The main points to consider regarding the Standards-Based Education would be:

- Time and support are the variables
- Learning is the constant
- No child is left behind by design
- Focus is on learning

Ms. D'Agostino gave an outstanding presentation on the data she received from lead teachers and staff on the standard benchmarks that teachers find important and parents are happy to see. The main goal is to inspire the students and to show the progress over a period of time. The School Committee members were impressed with the beta site and are looking forward to it being available for all to see.

DIVERSION PROGRAM

Chief of Police, Fred Ryan and Ms. Ellen Digby, Truant Officer, Arlington High School handed out the Diversion Program summary and the Diversion Contract and plans to implement this program in the fall of 2007. Along with the Arlington Youth Health & Safety Coalition the program will offer an alternative to the traditional criminal justice system to the youths of Arlington. Chief Ryan acknowledged the support from Mr. Skidmore, Mr. Levenson and the coalition and how critical this is to the success of the program.

The School Committee members are thrilled about the Diversion Program and asked Chief Ryan to document and to make sure records are kept of the success of the program with keeping with confidentiality and collecting data to present the success of the program.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Levenson spoke about prior comments on Out of District spending and wanted to state that clearly that those comments were his personal opinion based on informal conversation with other superintendents and special ed directors.

Superintendent Levenson referred to the letter dated on June 8, 2007 regarding some potential changes and to avoid rumors. He wanted to share with the community that the Assistant Superintendent has expressed interest in an opportunity to work in the North Andover School District. If the Assistant Superintendent accepts the position in North Andover, Kathy Bodie will be recommended to serve as interim Assistant Superintendent for an eight week period.. This will ensure no interruption in our summer hiring, summer professional development or back to school planning.

Ms. Burns referred to the AEA letter that Mr. Duranceau read at tonight's meeting and asked for clarification on how many AEA members there are vs. on how many AEA members were present and voted.

Superintendent agreed to review 8th grade Drama and stated that recommendation of the middle school to cut this program due to the budget and Superintendent will review this and noted how other important things have been cut, but did state he will look at this and

Mr. Thielman spoke on the 8th Grade Drama and said it has taken seven months to figure out the priorities and many options have been thought through.

Mr. Spangler commented on health issues and increasing physical activity in the elementary classes and again noted we do not need 10 units of any one thing, referring to the Great Body workshops.

On a motion by Mr. Spangler and seconded by Mr. Garballey it was Motioned to move the Superintendent to go explore finding \$20,000 from the discretionary expenses lines of budget to restore the 8th grade drama.

Ms Sheffler, Ms. Lovelace and Mr. Thielman were all in agreement not to support this motion due to the fact that there has been over eight months of budget discussions and this could set a precedent to other departments. The middle school gave this recommendation to the committee after the committee asked where the cuts should occur. ***Mr. Garballey wanted to amend the above motion and to send this to the budget subcommittee meeting.***

Superintendent Levenson was in agreement to continue to look at the entire budget not at just a certain areas and would bring back any options to the committee.

Mr. Spangler withdrew motion if Mr. Garballey will look at this at Budget Subcommittee

***On a motion by Mr. Garballey and seconded by Mr. Spangler it was
Moved to refer the issue of drama in the 8th grade to the Budget Subcommittee.***

The entire committee did note that the budget subcommittee could look further at the budget and report back any findings.

Mr. Garballey withdrew all motions.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Policies & Procedures

***On a motion by Mr. Spangler and seconded by Ms. Burns it was
Voted to move to direct the Policies and Procedures subcommittee to review existing policies as they pertain to liaisons between the School Committee and the Finance Committee, and between the School Committee and the Town Meeting, and to suggest any additions or amendments thereto to strengthen the links between the Committee and these bodies.
Vote: 6-0 motion passes***

***On a motion by Mr. Spangler and seconded by Mr. Garballey is was
Voted to move to direct the Policies and Procedures subcommittee to review Policy BEDH: Public Participation, and to propose appropriate amendments thereto that will facilitate dialogue between the Committee and the public during School Committee meetings.
Vote 6-0 motion passes***

***On a motion by Mr. Spangler and seconded by Mr. Thielman it was
Voted to move to direct the Policies and Procedures subcommittee to review Policy IJOA: Field Trips, and suggest appropriate changes including, but not limited to defining the roles and responsibilities of chaperones.
Vote: 6-0 motion passes***

Superintendent Levenson pointed out the last motion was clearly suggested from parents to improve communication between parents and teacher.

Community Relations

***On the motion by Ms. Burns and seconded Ms. Sheffler it was
Voted to move to direct the subcommittee on Policies and Procedures while revisiting on fundraising consider the impact on local business and the effects on PTO's.
Vote: 6-0 motion passes.***

Budget Subcommittee

Mr. Garballey spoke about his meeting last week and note no motions were made and will be holding another meeting at the end of June. Items of discussion at the next Budget Subcommittee will include Special Education cost, how to raise revenue through fundraising, and reducing athletic fees.

Curriculum & Instruction

Ms. Sheffler spoke about the Curriculum & Instruction Subcommittee meeting held on Tuesday, June 6, 2007 and spoke about the Special Education perspective and how the dedicated regular ed staff, and special ed staff spent 90 minutes with parents discussing the special ed laws and will continue the discussion at the next meeting Tuesday, July 11, 2007 at 11 AM. Ms. Sheffler will address the Minuteman issues, fiscal and curricular, with the Budget Subcommittee at a joint meeting on Tuesday, July 10, 2007 at 7 PM, in the School Committee room.

Accountability

On a motion by Mr. Thielman and seconded Ms. Burns by presented the following:

Per the unanimous votes of the Superintendent Accountability Subcommittee on June 5, 2007, moved that the full School Committee award Superintendent Levenson the following points on the Accountability Scoring Grid:

Goal 1: All Special Education and English Language Learner (ELL) students will achieve their full academic and social potential.

- a. Implement balance of Corrective Action Plan Items: **4 points** (max 4)
- d. Create a standardized set of procedures documenting criteria for pre-referral, testing eligibility, recommended test instruments, cut-off scores for eligibility, recommended actions based on score ranges, common goal wording and exit criteria: **2.5 points** (max 3)
- f. Continue to implement the 3-leveled ELL Program: **2 points** (max 2)

Goal 2: All students will attain high levels of academic success through the implementation of a data driven, standards based education.

- a. Articulate essential standards and common assessments in math K-8.
2 points (max 2)
- b. Conduct common assessments in math per schedule. Collate and share results with staff.
1 point (max 1)
- c. Conduct 3 common assessments in writing K-8 and share results with staff.
1 point (max 1)
- d. Create and implement common approaches to reading instruction, identification of struggling readers, and intervention for struggling readers (K-5).
3 points (max 4)

Goal 3: Ensure that all Arlington graduates are well-prepared for social, emotional, and vocational success in the 21st century.

- a. Create a broad-based working group of staff, administrators, students, parents, and community members to prioritize and refine which 21st century knowledge, skills, and habits of mind should be emphasized at Arlington High School.
3 points (max 3)

Goal 4: Provide a safe, healthy and positive environment for students and staff.

- b. Create, in collaboration with staff, students, and parents, a common set of expectations for student behavior at the high school and appropriate, effective, and consistent interventions for appropriate behavior. This would include alternatives to detention and out-of-school suspensions.
3 points (max 5)

Goal 5: Provide tools and systems that enable staff to focus on student success.

- c. Create a standardized, web-based maintenance request and tracking system to coordinate and prioritize facility upkeep.
2 points (max 2)
- d. Create and maintain an online calendar for administrators to better schedule school events and activities, thus reducing conflicting events.

1 point (max 1)

- f. Review space allocation in all schools to maximize the use of building space and enhance staff working conditions including careful consideration of use of spaces for the purpose for which they were designed. **1 point** (max 1)
- g. Prepare, in cooperation with the School Facilities Working Group, a report to Town Meeting. **3 points** (max 3)
- h. Submit Notices of Intent to the School Building Authority for the Thompson, Stratton and Arlington High School. **1 point** (max 1)
- i. Monitor and assess the new administrative structure. **1 point** (max 2)

Total points: 30.5

Vote: 6-0 unanimous

SECRETARY'S REPORTS

Mr. Thielman reported on all correspondence received: Dallin parent letters, Ponder Report, Stoneman, Chandler, & Miller letter to Mr. Tully dated May 21, 2007, Metco Legislative Alert, Human Rights Commission letter dated May 23, 2007 and thank you note from Julia Morrison, Traffic Supervisor for 50 years on her appreciation on receiving the chair.

NEW BUSINESS

On a motion from Mr. Thielman and seconded by Ms. Sheffler it was

Voted to hold a School Committee meeting on Tuesday, July 31, 2007 at 7:30 PM

Vote: 6-0 motion passes

Ms. Lovelace spoke about and offering an Exit Interview and will review this with Glenn Koocher from MASC at School Committee / Superintendent Retreat, Friday, June 15, 2007.

On a motion by Mr. Thielman and seconded by Ms. Sheffler it was

Voted to move to executive session.

Vote 6-0 Roll Call, Mr. Spangler, Yes, Ms. Sheffler, Yes, Ms. Burns, Yes, Mr. Thielman Yes, Mr. Garballey, Yes, and Ms. Lovelace, Yes

ADJOURN

On a motion by Mr. Spangler and seconded by Ms. Burns it was

Voted to adjourn at 11:05 PM

Vote 6-0 unanimous

Submitted by

Karen Fitzgerald

Administrative Assistant

School Committee